A CARDINAL’S GUIDE TO
PERSONAL BRANDING

Ball State University
CAREER CENTER
Think of some of your favorite brands: Nike, Apple, Coca-Cola... the list goes on. What makes these names memorable to you? Each brand has long-lasting elements that define the brand in your mind. For example, Apple is an innovator in the technology industry and Nike’s “Just Do It” campaign will be remembered for ages. But what does this have to do with you, and how does it relate to personal branding? As a person, you have many unique qualities, interests, strengths, and weaknesses that have continued to build you into your own brand. Learning more about yourself in terms of your strengths and weaknesses can help you to firmly build your personal brand, leaving you more confident and established as you begin job or internship hunting.

About this guide
Although you have much more depth than any brand, it may help if you imagine yourself as a product while reading this guide. The guide is written in the form of an integrated marketing and advertising campaign. By completing the steps from start to finish, you will build your personal brand. First you will build your brand after analyzing your strengths, weaknesses and how others currently perceive you. Then, you will establish this personal brand through creative elements and build upon it through branding activities and social media. If you have already started the personal branding process, use the Table of Contents to the left to select pages that will be most valuable to you. Information about helpful tools offered at the Ball State University Career Center is featured at the bottom of each page.
You probably have heard stories about yourself from when you were a child -- that you were the star of the show, a bossy sibling, or always saw the best in everyone. Even during childhood, our personal brands develop as we form our personalities. As we get older, we extend our network outside of our family - friends, neighbors, teachers, classmates, professional contacts, colleagues, and advisors - and with each person, we make a first impression. Personal branding aims to prevent that first impression from being anything negative, maintaining a consistent image whether on paper, in person, or online.

**External Analysis**  The following pages of this book outline ways to build and improve your personal brand, but first you must assess what your brand currently is. Understanding what people already think of you is a good place to start. These two tactics reach out to your network to discover brand qualities.

**Search Engines**  Search your name on Google, Yahoo, or Bing and see what comes up. If you have a common name, there could be many results before you find anything about yourself. If you have a rare name, details about you should be among the top results. Regardless, you always want the information that comes up to be positive, and should take action to reform your personal brand if it is not.

**Internal Analysis**  You also should analyze yourself. These two tactics allow you to better understand how your personality affects your strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, you will decide what attitude and characteristics your brand will feature, but comparing yourself internally and externally will help you create one unified brand personality.

**Myers-Briggs Personality Test**  The MBTI Test from the Myers-Briggs Foundation helps participants to better understand their personality type. Creating 16 personality types, there are four categories that respondents are asked about: extroversion versus introversion, sensing versus intuition, thinking versus feeling, and judging versus perceiving. After having established a personality type, the website provides additional resources on how to apply it to everyday life. [http://www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org) has more information.

**Career Center Tools**  The Career Center offers QUEST, TypeFocus, and Sigi3 to help students discover their interests, set career goals, and discover their personality types. TypeFocus most closely relates to personal branding, as it evaluates your interests and personality traits. QUEST and Sigi3 are better for those just beginning their career selection and personal branding. However, all of these tools are helpful for personal branding and self-reflection. Visit [bsu.edu/careers](http://bsu.edu/careers) for more information.

**Career Lab**  The Career Lab, located in Lucina Hall Room 220, has a variety of resources to help you regardless of how far along you are in the development of your personal brand. Choosing your major? Try QUEST online or informational career planning books in the Career Lab’s library. Want some personalized attention on a specific career question? Schedule a formal appointment with an advisor, or come on in - walk-ins are always welcome.
Now that you have researched your existing personal brand and have begun to analyze your personality traits, it is time to build the strategy for your revived personal brand. This personal brand should be reflected consistently in all other branding tactics - your résumé, cover letters, online presence, and live interactions.

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1 **SWOT Analysis**

SWOT Analyses help marketers to evaluate a brand’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in a competitive environment. This tool will help you to evaluate yourself, clueing you into not just what you are good at, but also what you can improve about yourself and what opportunities are available for you to grow as a brand and person. Lastly, you will consider things that prevent you or could hinder you in the future from taking steps to develop your personal brand. A deep analysis will help you leverage your strengths to take advantage of new opportunities.

2 **Unique Selling Proposition**

When there are twenty to two hundred résumés waiting to be reviewed for a position, how can you make yours stand out among the rest? Many young professionals believe that they must be able to reach a broad audience of potential employers to get a job, yet the key is finding a specific area of interest and expertise to differentiate your brand. Each brand should have a Unique Selling Proposition (USP), that makes a clear statement about the brand’s distinct characteristics and promise. All of the branding elements outlined in this guide should use your USP to define and sell your brand in a way that resonates with your target audience.

3 **Positioning**

The key to branding yourself is to combine all what people currently think of you, what you want people to think of you, and how this compares to your competitors. To find your position in the job market, you must ask yourself: “What skills, values, and qualities do I bring to the table that other job applicants do not have?” Your positioning statement should include your target market, the role of your brand in the industry market, your brand’s benefits, and why people should believe in your brand. The more specific you can make your positioning statement, the more you will attract interest.

4 **Elevator Pitch**

Suppose you are given thirty seconds on an elevator to introduce yourself to someone. An elevator pitch is a combination of your mannerisms and description of yourself that demonstrate your personal brand. Having an elevator pitch will help at networking events and job fairs.

**Professional Development Programs**

It is important that you understand the importance of professionalism in the workplace as you begin to establish your personal brand. Workshops hosted by the Career Center focus on topics such as conflict management, career mapping, and workplace diversity. To get a schedule of topics for each semester, visit [www.bsu.edu/careers](http://www.bsu.edu/careers)
Cover letters act as the first impression of your personal brand to a job recruiter or human resources employee, so it is important to make it a good first impression. Make sure to customize each letter to the specific employer.

**Header**  The header should include your address, phone number, and email address, and should be similar to the one used on your résumé.

**Heading and Date**  This section should include your current address, the date, and the address of the person to whom you are sending the cover letter. Make sure to include the person’s full name, if known, and his or her title.

**Salutation**  Try to include a specific name, but if you cannot, include the department's current name. In this case, “Director of (Department Name)” or “Dear Employer” are appropriate. Stay away from generic salutations such as “To Whom It May Concern.”

**Body**  The first paragraph of your letter should address why you are writing, for which position you are applying, and when/how you learned of the job. To differentiate your cover letter from others, doing this in an attention-getter format can help, as long as it is still professional. The second paragraph should outline why you are interested and qualified for the job, and highlight some important achievements and relevant experience. Do not summarize your résumé. The final paragraph should thank the reader for his or her time, set specific plans to follow up, and refer the reader to your attached résumé for more information.

**Close and Signature**  Your salutation should be professional, and “Sincerely” is most commonly used. A handwritten signature, and your typed name underneath should be included.

**Enclosures**  This refers to the enclosed résumé, and should state the number of enclosures if multiple documents are attached.

**Cardinal Career Link**  If you are still struggling with perfecting your résumé or want to make it digitally available, try using the Résumé Builder feature on Cardinal Career Link. Using your Ball State username and password, you can create a profile that is available to prospective employers, access job boards, schedule advising appointments, and much more.
Most employers review a résumé for less than ten seconds before making a judgment, so it is important that your résumé shows your brand, is descriptive, and is free from spelling errors.

**Heading** Your résumé’s heading should include your name, address, phone number, email address, and logo (if you have one). Make sure to indicate temporary and permanent addresses. Email addresses should be professional, most commonly your name. Résumés are typically one page long, but differ according to industry.

**GPA** Include your GPA only if it is higher than a 3.0.

**Subheads** Under each main heading you should include your position title, the organization or company, city, state, and dates that you are involved. If you are still working there or involved, use “present” as your end date. Full addresses and phone numbers are unnecessary.

**Phrasing** Strong action verbs describe activities and responsibilities you performed at each position. Use present tense verbs for positions that you hold presently, and past tense verbs for positions and accomplishments from the past.

**Classwork** Relevant classwork experience and projects should be showcased on your résumé. Relevant classes should only include descriptive class titles, not course numbers.

**Numbers** To make your résumé really stand out, quantify as much as possible. Whether this includes a budget for the project, how many people you managed or were in the group, or how much time you spent working on the activity, these numbers can be impressive when used effectively.

**Skills** This section may be good to include if you do not have a lot of other experiences to include. Skills should be relative to the job you are applying for, and should not include skills that are expected. For example, most jobs expect applicants know how to use a PC, so it is not a special skill.

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**Résumé Critiques** After using the tips above, bring your résumé in to be reviewed by an advisor at the Career Center by signing up for an appointment through Cardinal Career Link. Their expertise in job hunting and résumés can help you take a good résumé, add some power words, and make that résumé stand out from your competition’s résumés.
Whether networking, interviewing for a position, or meeting with a client on the job, is it important to express proper business etiquette in order to maintain your personal brand and create a positive lasting impression. Below are some easy, helpful tips to get you started.

**Confused about which fork to use?** Generally, it is safe to start with the outermost utensils and work your way in.

**Once you have picked up a utensil, it should not go back on the table. Silverware also should not be left in bowls, as this can cause spills. Place your knife across the top of your plate, and when finished eating, flip your knife upside down to tell the server to take your plate.**

**In formal settings, your drink will always be to your right and your bread will always be to your left. To remember this, place your index fingers on your thumbs to make a lowercase “b” on your left hand and “d” on your right hand.**

**When eating bread, take a small section of the butter and leave it on your bread plate. Tear small bites of your bread individually, buttering each piece separately. The butter knife should rest on your plate when not being used.**

**Networking or interviewing can be hard to do while eating. Cut your food into small, bite-size pieces to make chewing easier. If you need to take a break from speaking to eat a little, ask the other person a question.**

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**Etiquette Dinners**  
If you’re still curious which direction to pass your food at a formal dinner setting or have more “What If?” questions, consider attending an etiquette dinner hosted by the Career Center. For only $10 you will not only receive a three-course meal but also training on proper dinner habits. Call or email the Career Center to obtain a semester schedule and register for an etiquette dinner that fits your schedule.
INTERVIEWS: WHAT TO (AND NOT TO) WEAR

Your cover letter, résumé, and personal correspondence with the company have demonstrated your personal brand, but dressing to impress for the interview will give you the confidence to showcase yourself completely.

**Hair, Face & Nails**  Your overall look should be natural, including your make-up, hair, and skin color. Long hair should be pulled away from the face, and all hairstyles should be clean. No facial piercings should be worn, and one earring in each ear is acceptable. Nails should be short and neutral.

**Suit**  Many young female professionals make the mistake of wearing ill-fitting clothes to an interview. Pants and skirt suits in neutral colors are acceptable. Jackets should be custom-fitted, and pants and skirts should not fit too tightly. Skirts should be nearly knee length.

**Jewelry & Accessories**  All accessories, such as belts, scarves, and purses, should be coordinated with your outfit. Jewelry should be simple - silver, gold, or pearls are appropriate. Dangling earrings, oversized rings, and loud bracelets are frowned upon and can distract from your message.

**Shoes & Hosiery**  Conservative, close-toed pumps should have no more than a two-inch heel. Pantyhose should be worn with a skirt, and neutral dress socks should be worn with pants. Shoes should be in good condition and be comfortable to wear.

**Hair, Face & Nails**  Your face, hair, and nails should be well-groomed, and a short haircut is preferred. Facial piercings should not be worn and hair should be a natural color, especially in more conservative industries. Facial hair should be short, clean, and managed daily.

**Suit**  Business suits are typically black, charcoal, or navy, while shirts should be white or light blue. Pin-striped suits are acceptable, but pin-stripes on shirts is considered casual. Jackets should be fitted, and pants should sit comfortably around the waist.

**Jewelry & Tie**  Jewelry should be kept at a minimum, but a professional watch can be worn. Wedding bands and conservative style rings are acceptable, but earrings, necklaces, and bracelets of any kind are too casual. Dark-colored striped, polka-dotted, plaid, and paisley ties are standard.

**Shoes & Socks**  Your shoe and sock color should blend with the rest of your outfit, and black, dark brown, and cordovan are most common. Dress socks should reach mid-calf, and shoes should be in good condition and shined.

Cardinal Closet  Every February, the Office of Housing and Residence Life sponsors Cardinal Closet, a service that provides one free interview outfit to eligible seniors and juniors who are preparing their job or internship search. To apply and make an appointment, visit: http://housing.iweb.bsu.edu/cardinalcloset. Donations can be dropped off in February at the Office of Student Life, the Office of Housing and Residence Life, and the Career Center.
Everyone gets nervous for their first interviews, but mastering a few tricks will ease the pressure. Your actions will speak as loud as your words, so make your brand shine by being natural and true to yourself.

### DO

- Ask how long the interview will take when you set up the appointment. This will prevent you from rambling during the interview.
- Research the hiring manager, job position, and company. This will make you more comfortable and prepared.
- Eat a healthy meal. A light meal will make you more alert and awake during an interview, but won’t make you nauseous if you start feeling nervous. Limit caffeine intake to prevent pre-interview jitters.
- Arrive on time. Ideally, you should arrive about ten minutes before your appointment. If you think you might be late, make sure to call your interviewer. Plan ahead if you think you might run into traffic or bad weather.
- Use the 50/50 Rule. The interviewer and yourself should each talk for 50 percent of the interview to prevent rambling.
- Be natural. The interviewer wants to know if you fit well with the current employees. Faking your personality and skills will only live to haunt you down the road.
- Make eye contact. Good posture and eye contact go a long way, showing that you are confident and at ease.
- Tell a good story. Most questions can be answered using the three Cs: the circumstances, your conduct, and the conclusion. Such stories demonstrate your ability to problem solve and think quickly.
- Send thank you notes to everyone that you meet during the interview, even the secretary. This may require getting business cards or taking notes during the interview.

### DON’T

- Forget to practice. Even if you know what you want to say, rehearsing responses beforehand helps eliminate nervousness.
- Overlook your question list. Many interviewees don’t ask questions at the end of the interview. Make a list of three questions you would like to ask the interviewer.
- Neglect your hygiene. Don’t show up to an interview without having brushed your teeth or hair, showered, or dressed well, as your interviewer will not take you seriously. Use discretion when wearing cologne or perfume.
- Leave behind the essentials. Always bring your driving directions, pen and notebook, stain remover, tissues, and extra copies of your résumé, references, portfolio and business cards.
- Let nervousness shake you. It’s okay to be nervous. Acknowledge it to the interviewer, if needed, and move on.
- Focus on the past. Your interviewer wants to know how your past only because he/she wants to see how you will use the lessons learned to change your future performance.
- Talk badly about past jobs. Even if past jobs and bosses were negative experiences, do not talk bad about them. The interviewer will question what you would say about them if you were hired.
- Make lengthy or short responses. On average, 20 seconds to two minutes is enough to answer adequately.
- Forget to follow up. If you have not heard back from the company within a few weeks of the interview, call your interviewer to ask for an update. Establish the time to call at the end of the interview.

### Practice Interviews & On-Campus Interviews

If you are getting ready to start your job or internship search, log into your Cardinal Career Link account to set up a practice interview with an advisor at the Career Center. When you have your interview skills polished, keep your eyes open for on-campus interviews with employers on Cardinal Career Link.
HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HELP YOU GET A JOB

91% That’s how many employers look at social media pages like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn when making hiring decisions. It is important to stay true to yourself and keep your pages work appropriate. This shows employers that you are professional, unique, and have a personality that fits with their company.

**Do**

1. **Make a LinkedIn account.** You probably have accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and maybe even Foursquare, Instagram, and Pinterest -- but don’t forget LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a professional social network that helps you to network with colleagues and classmates.

2. **Delete old accounts.** Most of us were not thinking about post-college job hunting when we posted on our MySpace pages in middle school. To eliminate any potential unprofessionalism (and embarrassment) delete any accounts you have not used recently.

3. **Change your account settings.** If you haven’t already done this, make your profiles private. New settings like the “Groups” feature on Facebook allow posts to be seen by only specific people. If you cannot figure out the set-up on your own, simply google settings for the social media site and easy directions should come up.

4. **Make yourself available.** No one will know that you are looking for a job if you do not say so. Join groups for job hunting or within your industry, build a following, and ask if anyone knows of any openings. As long as you do not spam, there is no shame in asking.

5. **Hyperlink your résumé.** Don’t forget to add the URLs for your LinkedIn and Twitter pages onto the header of your résumé. This shows hiring managers that you have nothing to hide. It invites them to join your network, so even if you do not get that job, they might be able to refer you to someone else.

**Do Not**

1. **Share too much information.** Whether it’s a picture of you on spring break, excessive personal life details, or a post about you getting a job offer -- do not post it unless you would be comfortable having it on the front page of a major newspaper. This is one case when too much isn’t necessarily a good thing.

2. **Use bad grammar and spelling.** Few people are perfect spellers, and for that reason autocorrect and spell check were created. You won’t regret putting in extra effort to eliminate typos, excessive abbreviations, and bad grammar.

3. **Forget to watch your language.** It’s important to be sensitive, politically correct, and free of profanity in order to maintain a professional appearance. Although sarcasm is common in our culture, it doesn’t always come off right, so use with discretion.

4. **Neglect your accounts.** If you make an account, upkeep it. Even if you do not post frequently, you should make sure that tags from friends appropriately maintain your brand. You also should only add people who you consider positive associations.

5. **Limit yourself to existing connections.** Most young professionals fear reaching out to people they do not know well, but social media provide limitless connections. Begin by following people you want to follow you, start talking, and then make your job request. Don’t keep all communication online; offer to meet connections in person as well.

**Reppler** One easy way to make sure your posts are boosting, not hurting, your personal brand is through reppler.com. Link your social media pages to your reppler account, and receive notifications when content that could be seen as negative are posted.

**Google Alerts** Google Alerts allow you to receive updates when Internet content related to keywords is updated. By setting up an account with keywords related to job titles you are interested in, your will not have to scour every job board on the Internet.

**Pinterest** If you are breaking into a creative field, Pinterest can help your personal brand stand out. Make a professional Pinterest account with boards like “Interview Attire,” “My résumé,” “Industry Articles,” “My Portfolio,” and “People I Admire.”

**Klout** Interaction goes a long way in social media. Social media monitoring tools like Klout tell measure the impact of your posts within your network. Other sites, such as Twitalyzer or BackType, exist with similar purposes exist and offer various features.

**Social Media Critiques** Wondering how prospective employers are viewing your social media pages? Set up an appointment with a Career Center advisor to have a social media critique done on your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media pages. This will help you maintain a respectable personal brand not only in person, but also online.
YOUR ONGOING PERSONAL BRAND

Whether online or in person, it is important to keep your personal brand consistent and well-maintained. Your personal brand should expand as you become more professionally established, and below are some ways to help your brand grow.

**NETWORK**
It is always a good idea to keep your business cards on you, just in case you meet someone to add to your network. Although networking is hard for many young professionals, it is the easiest way to find a job.

**WORK PART-TIME**
Whether within your desired industry or not, part-time work will provide you with professional skills that can transfer into permanent positions. It demonstrates your energy, punctuality, and time management abilities.

**BUY YOUR NAME’S URL**
By buying the URL for your name or profile name, you can keep your online brand consistent. This will allow your pages to be easily found, and is cheap to maintain on a monthly or annual basis.

**BE A LEADER**
Prospective employers want to hire the “President” or “Director” of an organization, not just members. Choose quality over quantity. Leadership roles will help you in most job positions.

**WRITE A BLOG**
By writing a blog about your industry, field of study, or interests, you show people that you are passionate about these topics. If your blog gets popular, your followers can help you land a job.

**JOIN A CAREER RELATED ORGANIZATION**
Career related organizations provide endless opportunities for education and networking. Regardless of your desired industry, there is some kind of professional organization specific to your interests.

**JOB SHADOW, INTERN, OR CO-OP**
Jobshadows, internships, and co-ops are great for a few reasons: 1) they allow you to test a career field, 2) they establish connections for your network, and 3) they help you practice professional skills before you graduate.

**VOLUNTEER FOR A CAUSE**
Many companies make it a point to raise awareness of the causes they care about, and you should do the same. By volunteering for a cause, your personal brand shows compassion and the desire to improve the community around you.

**DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO**
No matter whether you are studying an art, a science, or something in between, showcasing your work demonstrates your professional prowess and abilities. While some traditional industries still prefer hard copy portfolios, electronic or online portfolios often appeal to more modernized industries.

**BECOME AN EXPERT**
It becomes easier to network with people outside of your industry if you are well-educated in other fields of study. On top of making small talk comfortable, it allows you to understand diverse perspectives and connect with people on a deeper level.

*Job Fairs*  The Career Center offers a Fall Job Fair each fall semester and a Cardinal Job Fair each spring semester with nearly 100 employers. Bring your résumés and portfolios to share with prospective employers, and keep your eyes open in the Daily News before the event for a listing of the employers that will be there.
STILL WANT MORE?

Check out the following resources and the Ball State Career Center website for more details about personal branding and the brand elements included in this brochure:


* This guide was created with collaboration between the Ball State University Career Center and Kayla Green, ‘13 advertising major, in completion of an Honors College thesis.